SL Introductory Lesson for Independent Project Teachers

Objectives

- SWBAT define service-learning.
- SWBAT understand the importance of civic engagement in their communities.
- SWBAT identify the expectations for connecting service to classroom content.
- SWBAT identify potential service project opportunities that are connected to their course work.

Materials

- White board or flip chart paper
- Markers
- Video projector and speakers

Time

One classroom session of 45 minutes

Bell Ringer

Write about a time when you or someone you know participated in a project or activity that strengthened or helped the community. Upon completion share your story with a partner. The teacher should ask for 3-4 volunteers to share their stories and then conduct a reflection using the following questions:

- What kind of impact did your service have? On ourselves? On others?
- What “life lessons” did you learn from the experience?
- Who benefited? How?
- What might you have done differently now knowing what you know as an older, wise, more mature individual?

Alternatively, you can facilitate a team-building activity to introduce students to the idea of problem-solving in communities. You will need one 6-8’ length of laundry line (get this at any hardware store) for every two students. Arrange 4 lengths of rope into what looks like an asterisk. You will need to have 3-5 of these stations at different points in your classroom or hallway. Each student should stand at the end of one length of rope. At your instruction, everyone picks up their end of the rope. They can hold only the last inch of the length of rope and they cannot let go or change hands during the activity. Instruct the students to create the biggest knot possible in the next two minutes, again, without letting go of the rope. Think about students moving in and out sort of like a maypole exercise to create the knot. After two minutes, have all students place their knots back on the ground. Instruct them to move to a different station. Now, using the same instructions, they must undo the knot. It is critical here that they hold only the last one inch of their rope length and not ever let go or change hands. Debrief with the following questions:
How did this activity reflect real life?
Was this a competition? (not really, but groups usually get competitive...why?)
The knot is a metaphor. Of what? (several answers, but we like “social problems”)
Was it easier to make the knot or undo the knot? Which took more communication?
How is that like problems in real life?
What typically happens when we encounter a problem?
What motivates or inspires us to stop and solve the problem?
What problem-solving skills did this activity require?
Did leadership emerge within any groups? What did that look like?
How is this activity linked to a discussion of service-learning?

Procedure

1. Construct a T-chart (ask students to do the same at their desk) on your white board or flip chart paper. On the left hand side write “Service”. On the right hand side write “Learning”. Ask students to think for 15-20 seconds about how they would define or how they think about those two words. Write down 7-8 ideas for each word.

2. Upon completing the chart, now draw the main ideas from each side of the t-chart and construct a definition of service-learning. Compare this definition to the CPS definition of service-learning. Service-learning is a teaching strategy that connects classroom curriculum with service projects. Service-learning engages students in projects that serve the community while building social, civic, and academic skills.

3. What are the similarities? What are the differences? You should emphasize that service-learning is different than community service or volunteering. Service-learning is an intentional teaching and learning strategy that connects classroom with community. All service-learning projects should start in the classroom and be rooted in classroom curricular themes, activities, and experiences. Volunteering and community service are done without intentional learning taking place.

4. If possible, show a service-learning video. You can find two videos on safari montage ([http://safari.cps.k12.il.us/SAFARI/montage/login/login.php?](http://safari.cps.k12.il.us/SAFARI/montage/login/login.php?)) Just search on service learning once you are in safari montage. Lead a brief discussion with your students using the following questions:
   a. What were students doing?
   b. What did students seem to be getting out of the experiences?
   c. Do you think any learning is taking place? If so, what?
   d. What kind of impact do you think students have on their community through these experiences?
   e. Do you think these experiences should be required? If so, why?

5. As you think through these questions with your students, they may suggest that service shouldn’t be required. It should come from the heart. A response is that we require Math, Language, Social Science, Science, etc. Is it important to require civic preparation as well?
6. Building connections – at this point you should help students understand the potential connections between the major themes and concepts embedded in your curriculum with service and action opportunities in the community and Chicago.
   a. Identify the main themes and concepts that you will be studying this year in your course.
   b. Present the assignments students will be expected to complete to earn credit for their service-learning project. Please see the attachment for a template of suggested assignments. Offer ways for students to present their projects back to the class later in the semester or year. Remember, students must complete three (3) service-learning projects in order to graduate.
   c. Brainstorm with students possible ways to engage in service that connect with classroom content.
7. Now hand out an index card to each student. Ask each student to write down a community organization they, family members or friends have visited or volunteered at. Organizations might include libraries, youth organizations, senior centers, etc. After a few minutes, gather the index cards. Either ask a volunteer to compile a list of the organizations named by students or you should create a list of all organizations named. This can serve as a good starter list of organizations for students to consider as they think about their service project. Students can always check out the list of organizations at www.cps.edu/ServiceLearning. Share the student-generated list with the group during your next class period.
8. To close this lesson, ask students to respond to the following prompt as a think-pair-share exercise:
   a. Name a hero who had an impact on their community.
   b. What did that person do/accomplish? Did that person encounter any struggles or challenges along the way?
   c. What did that person do or how did he/she work that we can learn from or emulate as we complete our service projects?
9. Ask students to share out their leaders and any thoughts they have. Suggest to students that our work follows in the tradition of individuals and groups who have addressed important issues in their communities.